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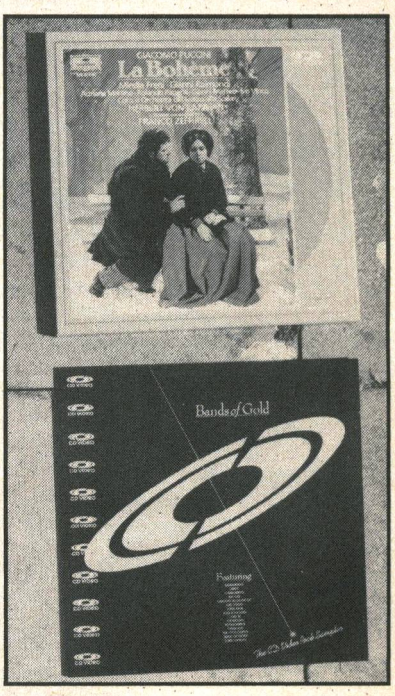


Cover: Philips' new CDV-185 clip player and a snatch from The Mission's *Tower Of Strength*, a power play from page 20.

FRONT LINE THOUGHTS

How has the public taken to CD Video? Paul Andrews visits one of the shops that has put its faith in the new format

ONCE THE antiquarian bookshop that inspired an oddball film, 84 Charing Cross Road is now the address of Covent Garden Records — a CD enthusiast's mecca, presently in the vanguard of CD Video.

Where academics used to browse through dusty tomes, today's Londoners take a few minutes out of their lunch hour to check out what's new on the little silver discs, or venture downstairs to try out the latest players in the store's sumptuous auditioning rooms.

But in recent months, they've been able to feast their eyes as well as their ears down there — TV has finally crept into this haven of strictly aural pleasures.

The sets are, of course, linked up to the first wave of CD Video machines, rubbing shoulders on the shelves with their sound-only cousins. There's not a VCR in sight — making Covent Garden perhaps the toughest market for the new technology.

Covent Garden Records has certainly put a lot of faith in the new format. The trail-blazing Philips, Pioneer and Marantz machines take pride of place in the shop's hardware display, confidence that seemed to pay off with plenty of customer interest.

Just two weeks after the launch a couple of dozen machines were sold — with the promise of more to come.

'CD Video is doing well,' claims managing director Howard Woo. 'At the beginning we were selling mainly to old LaserVision people, but now we get more people who are looking to buy a CD player with the capability to have vision.'

IT'S A split reflected in the sales figures. LaserVision owners tend to go for Philips' CDV-475 with its Active Play capabilities — only found on the older discs — whereas those taking the plunge for the first time are often attracted by the Pioneer CLD-1200's qualities, particularly its solid build. The result is sales of each running virtually neck-and-neck.

'The Marantz machine was slow to take off,' says Woo. 'But now there is quite a lot of interest.' As well as featuring Active Play, the Marantz name is popular among audiophile customers.

Listening to any of the machines is enough to make it obvious that sound is the true strength of the format, a feeling confirmed by the success of Covent Garden Records' experiment with the format in an audio-led setting. The company is selling them first and foremost as CD players.

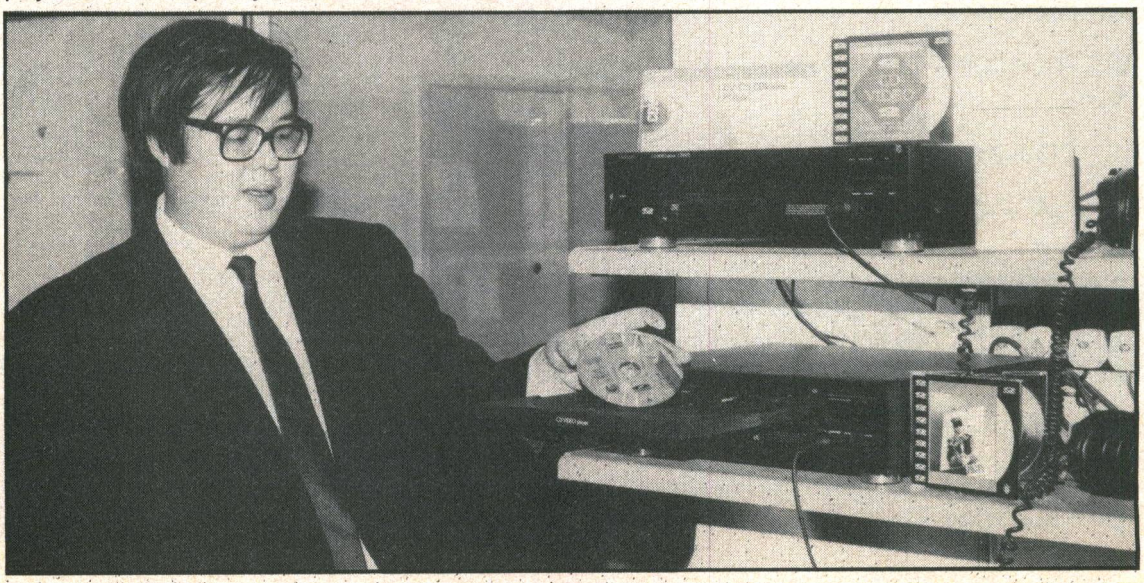
'We're teaching the public that a CDV player is not a video, it's a CD-plus player. It's the CD sound with pictures. As I explain to customers, they will be using it as a CD player probably between 75 and 85 per cent of the time, because the vision software is not there at the moment.'

In the past, sound has been a poor relation in video technology. CDV has turned that tradition on its head, but is it now the pictures that take second place?

Howard Woo disagrees. In his view, 'the video adds an important extra dimension; you get totally involved.' But it's not all roses, especially on the software side.

'The quality of the 5in. pop software is very strong, but you get others — material from the '60s, never meant to be commercial product — and some of that is highly suspect.

'Pop 12in. is quite good, but you need more current material. With its fine picture, CDV will succeed — if you can get current singles and albums.



● *Howard Woo shows off the CDV player selection in his basement grotto.*

● *84 Charing Cross Road: a famous address for CDV.*

'And certain old LaserVision discs have drop-outs. That's no fault of the machines — it's the poor quality of the pressings. Some were pressed very, very well, and some very badly.'

BEHIND THE quality question lies the even thornier issue of product availability. Again reflecting its audio roots, virtually all new software is music-based, and new titles are only trickling into the shops.

Because of copyright problems, few movies are available other than original LaserDisc releases — which are ageing in both content and technology. New material is unlikely to hit the streets until CDV's popularity makes a mass rental market viable.

The nature of the format and its current software has led to problems at the actual point of sale. While the hi-fi music content appeals to high street record stores, many have been unable to cope with the need to educate the public about a new, specialised product.

Despite representing the vanguard of a whole potential new market, racks of poorly displayed discs, frequently including incompatible American NTSC standard material, are often simply left unexplained — and unsold — in stores' remoter corners.

Even to the clued-up retailer, future directions for the system remain unclear. During its first three months, only one new player — the Marantz — was added to the initial brace, and public awareness remained low.

'There hasn't been very much promotion,' complains Woo. 'But when we have a CDV player in the window the number of enquiries is very good — people come in and see what we've got.'

He hopes for an even better response when there's a greater choice of hardware.

'All the other manufacturers have plans, but they're still sitting on them. In Japan, CDV is doing terrifically well: there's a great variety of upper end players.'

Woo identifies another niche for the format — the portable sector: 'As soon as they are able to produce clip players for around £299, with an LCD screen, then they will have a market.

'I think CDV will succeed over Video 8 as a personal video format, because the software is much cheaper — plus it is compatible with home players.'

The message from the market-place is that despite a slow take-off, the likes of Covent Garden Records are prepared to work to make a future for CD Video.

But we shall have to wait and see whether that future is alongside the home VCR, in the hi-fi rack, or hooked to trendy belts.

● *The golden discs — plenty of variety, but not a lot of choice.*

Steve May and Paul Andrews look at the latest laserdecks and associated AV equipment — prices from £349 to £769.

PIONEER CLD-1200

IT IS fitting that Pioneer, who persevered with the development and marketing of LaserVision long after inventors Philips has seemingly abandoned the format, should be shoulder to shoulder with the Dutch company in the early days of CD Video.

And with its pacesetter, the £579 CLD-1200 player, it may even have stolen an early lead over its rivals.

At first glance, there doesn't look to be much to choose between the runners. The CLD-1200 is a touch bigger than the Philips 475, at 420mm wide, 110mm high and 438mm deep, but despite the larger size, the Pioneer gives an impression of robustness rather than bulk — which is confirmed by a look at the build. Quality here is high, with the disc tray, for instance, being particularly well engineered.

The tray is hidden behind a front panel, which rolls forward in its entirety to allow discs to be inserted. The drawer is grooved to receive 12in., 8in., 4¾in. and 3in. CD single discs (no adaptors needed here) while a magnetic disc clamper makes sure they stay put.

With the tray in, the fascia flap closes to reveal the business end of the machine. CD, CDV and LD logos are emblazoned across the top; a numerical keypad for search, track selection and program input, plus transport controls, complete the picture. Naturally, all are duplicated on the infra-red remote.

Backside connections comprise Scart, RF and phono video output, plus standard phono audio plugs, but sadly there's no direct digital output.

Features are very much as on the Philips: 20-track memory, on-screen display, repeat playback facility and Chapter Skip/Next Track nudges.

But there is more — like Auto Programme Edit, which fits selected CD tracks into a specified time-slot for dubbing; and random playback, which selects the tracks for you.

Another plus for the Pioneer is its ability to decode Laserdisc teletext. A trail blazing early LaserVision disc (the *BBC Book of Birds*) incorporated Ceefax-style pages, carrying background info and the like — it was a neat innovation that was never really followed-up (but might be nice to see back).

Interestingly, there is also no problem with the Marantz AV-251 switching box, which affected the Philips CDV-475.

The other side of the coin, though, is the CLD-1200's lack of Active Play trickery which makes the machine unable to produce any slo-mo functions, noiseless freeze-frame, advance, etc.

In common with other PAL CD Video players, this machine doesn't play the video on American NTSC discs, but it will play back the audio portion with no problem.

Picture quality is superb. The one-chip integrated video circuit at the heart of the pick-up assembly pumps out stunningly clear images, with virtually no noise on bright colours, which compare favourably with the Philips.

Sound reproduction, too, is good, though comparison with the Philips shows a subtle difference in quality. To wit, the Pioneer's smoothness contrasts with a crisp precision from the Philips.

The Pioneer employs a soft 2× oversampling sound system, which gives a 95dB dynamic range and 0.005 per cent harmonic distortion. However, a good number of regular CD players can out perform this machine on audio grounds.

One unique feature on the CLD-1200 is CX noise reduction, a system found on previous Pioneer LV players — but virtually nowhere else. Only a very few LaserVision discs carry CX encoding, a system designed to improve signal-to-noise ratio and dynamic range on analogue recordings.

This Pioneer produces better sound from non-CX analogue discs than previous LV players.

Despite minor omissions — trick play and a digital output (for possible add-ons) — the CLD-1200 wins out on picture quality and construction, backed up by good but not great sound and audio facilities, plus nice extras like auto edit, CX encoding and random CD play.

PHILIPS CDV-185

THE FIRST of a new generation of CD Video is Philips' CDV-185 clip player — retailing for well below the price of its bigger sisters, at just £349, but not capable of handling the larger 8in. and 12in. video discs.

This is clearly a CD player with pictures as a bonus. The 5in. CDV discs it plays carry only six minutes of video — just enough for a pop clip — plus an extra 20 minutes of music. It can also handle the standard 5in. and new 3in., 20 minute, audio-only silver discs.

With big gold feet, it looks more at home stacked with the other hi-fi separates than with the living room TV set.

The deck includes a full remote control, direct selection of up to 10 tracks or times (audio or video), for immediate or programmed playback; backward or forward skip to any track; track repeat; and forward or reverse search.

Programming is aided by an on-screen display, though a comprehensive panel of fascia LEDs duplicates the information for audio-only use. All controls are repeated on the deck itself.

Random-order shuffle-play is possible. So is shared listening, thanks to a pair of headphone sockets, with their own volume control.

Audio circuitry is a match for existing audio-only models, employing much of the same circuitry. Using a 16-bit 4× oversampling system, Philips claims a 96dB dynamic range and 0.003 per cent harmonic distortion.

A Scart socket is fitted for top notch video delivery, as are audio-video phono outlets and the standard RF connection. Also fitted is a digital output socket.

PHILIPS CDV-475

THE £499 CDV-475, like other CD Video hardware, is more an audio separate than a traditional video unit. Indeed, at 420mm wide, and with a standard matt black finish, it looks very much at home in an audio stack system.

The fascia is in two parts, the top housing the pull-out tray, moulded to accommodate various disc sizes — 4¾in., 8in., and 12in. This turns out to be a rather flimsy affair and, having been designed before the new 3in. CD singles came onto the market, an adaptor is needed to fit these into it.

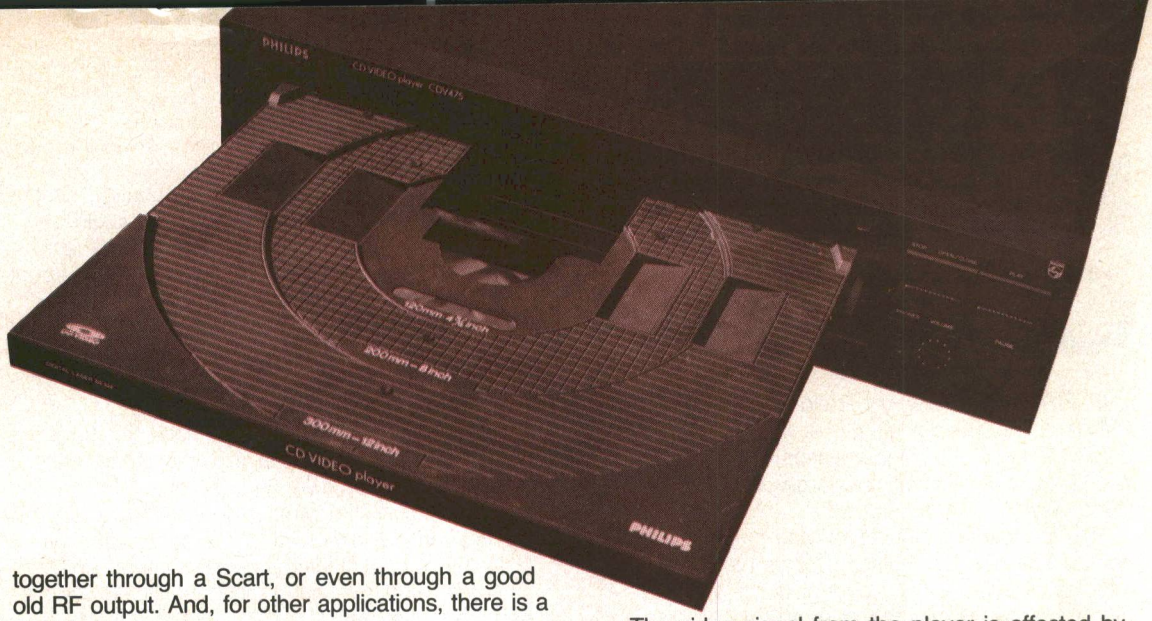
Once the drawer is closed, an LED status window becomes visible, dominating the lower half of the fascia. It shows elapsed time, in minutes and seconds, plus chapter and index data.

Only the basic control buttons are found on the main box itself — stop, play, volume, pause and standby are located on the right hand side, as is a 6.3mm headphone jack.

The remote handset, however, offers full trick-play features — very high quality, noise free, variable speed slo-mo, still frame, frame advance and reverse — but these are only available on Active Play mastered video discs.

Remembering that the CDV-475 is also a reasonably featured CD player, Philips has put in many familiar CD functions, for instance replaying up to 20 tracks in any order. But it makes the whole thing simpler by providing a user-friendly on-screen video display.

Round the back are found most of the outputs anyone is ever likely to need. Video and audio can be routed out separately (to TV monitor and audio system) via phono connectors. Or they can run ►



◄ together through a Scart, or even through a good old RF output. And, for other applications, there is a digital phono output.

Picture quality on the CDV-475 is very good, at least compared with VHS, Video 8 and SuperBeta tape formats. It is also somewhat better than many of the old LaserVision players we've seen (LaserVision players can vary dramatically in performance).

As for S-VHS, in theory the two systems are roughly on a par, in terms of picture resolution. But a lot depends on how good the master material is, and CD Video has the notable advantage of not suffering from wear to anything like the degree that tape does.

Nevertheless, there are some minor picture problems, with both reds and blues appearing noisy. These can be cleaned up somewhat by taking the picture via the RGB Scart output into an RGB Scart TV monitor.

However, it should be noted that there are minor incompatibilities in RGB equipment which can adversely affect colour fidelity.

The trick play modes provide good value for money, although again with the proviso that you need Active Play software — which covers only some EPs and LPs, but no singles.

If you have a (well-mastered) Active Play disc, then you can watch incredible, clear, slo-mo effects which outstrip anything old-fashioned VHS could ever offer — even helped by digital frame stores.

Of course, if you haven't any Active Play discs, then these functions are of little value.

Audio performance is obviously an important factor in a machine that doubles as a CD player. And, in fact, it stands up well — even alongside upmarket dedicated Philips CD players, with which it shares a 16-bit 4× oversampling sound system.

Sound quality is crisp and lively, with a wide and dynamic stereo soundstage, though delivery sometimes seems a little unsubtle. Its vital audio statistics include a 20Hz-20KHz frequency response, a wide 96dB dynamic range, and a harmonic distortion of around 0.003 per cent.

Of course, the analogue sound on old laser discs falls well below these standards, but they are more than adequately reproduced by the CDV-475.

Not that there aren't niggles with this machine. One is its inability to deliver teletext information, which may restrict its use if CDV movies are released with teletext subtitles. The player actually strips out the lines of teletext information.

More serious, perhaps, is the Philips' incompatibility with some switching boxes — notably the Philips AV-1100 and Marantz AV-251. This could make it difficult to actually integrate the unit into an AV system.

The video signal from the player is affected by electrical interference from a capacitor at the switching box's input, resulting in loss of colour and sync.

Since this problem was highlighted in our first issue of *CD Video,* Philips has come up with a way round the problem. It recommends that a service engineer modify the box by adding a 75ohm load resistor network ahead of the input capacitor. But this in turn adversely affects the 'video enhance' facility of the switching box.

Alternatively, player and box can be linked by a cable with a bridging 150ohm resistor built in between signal and earth. The drawback in this case is that actual video signal amplitude is reduced — although in most cases that is unlikely to cause viewing problems.

Nevertheless, despite these teething troubles the Philips 475 does deliver the goods.

If trick play is more important than LaserVision teletext, and you can sort out the switching box problems, then this machine may have the edge among the first batch of CDV players.

BUILDING A SYSTEM

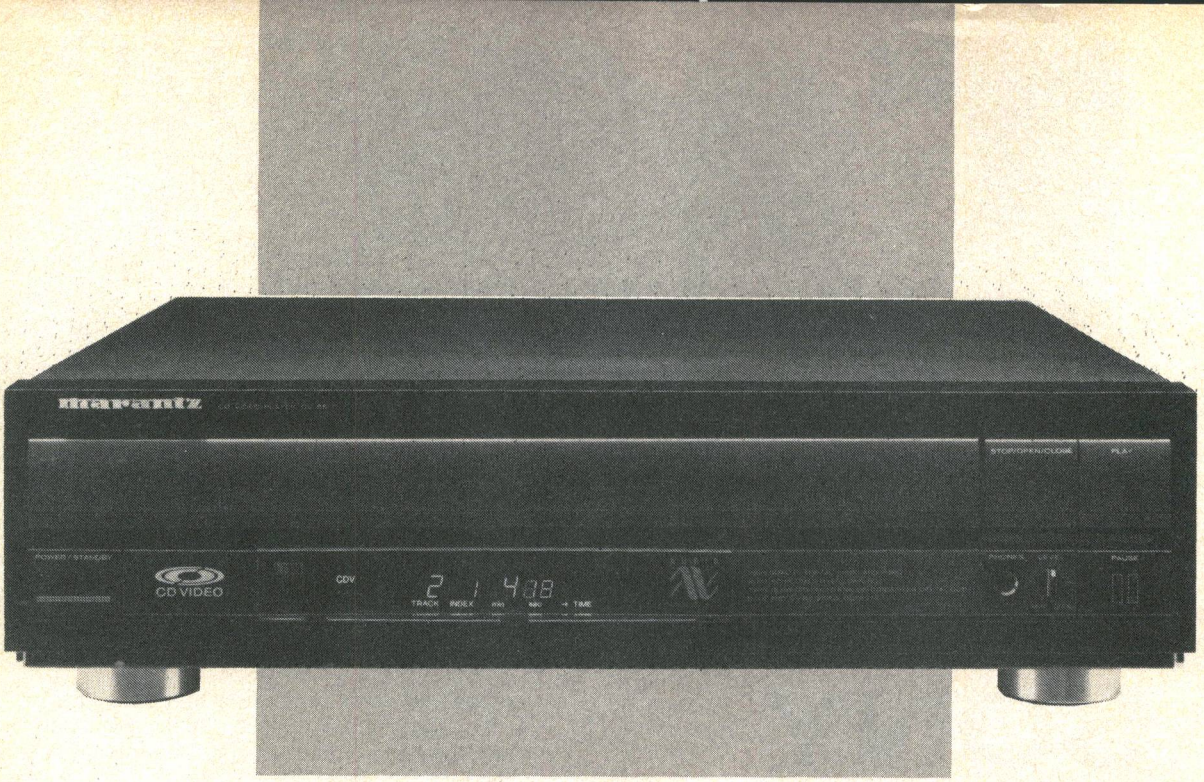
ALTHOUGH JVC steadfastly stands behind its VHD video disc system in Japan and maintains that it has no intention of supporting CD Video in Europe (for the time being at least), it has several machines that will excite CDV owners looking to build, or upgrade, an audio visual system.

The most remarkable of these is the £769 RX-1001V Digital Acoustics Process Receiver — a unique and multi-functional monster of a box that boasts a bravura display, a platoon of tiny life enhancing presets and source selectors on its front fascia.

Although calculated to look quite daunting, it opens up an A to Z of avenues for the enthusiastic videophile.

It's firstly a control amp of quite enormous power (120 watts per channel) and aggression. If a black rhino could sing, it would probably sound like the RX-1001.

Fortunately, this aggression can be tamed somewhat with a versatile onboard graphic equaliser that covers seven separate audio frequency bands, allowing the user to tailor any



MARANTZ CV-55

PHYSICALLY IDENTICAL to the Philips CDV-475, the £599 CV-55 from Marantz is actually a tweaked version of Philips' pace-making machine.

Marantz has replaced plenty of the innards, however, in an effort to beat some of the earlier deck's teething troubles. Audio upgrades are designed to appeal to the company's more 'audiophile' customers; while on the video side, noise-beating adjustments to the picture circuits have been made.

Most importantly, Marantz claims to have overcome the switching box problem which plagues the CDV-475. By reducing the DC level on the machine, interference causing picture glitches when switched through Marantz' own AV-251 box have apparently been cured.

Whether that or the other tweaks justify an extra £100 on the price over the Philips depends on individual rigs, tastes and pockets. Try to get a chance to view, and hear, the two side by side before deciding which is the better buy. In our view, both sound excellent. ►

sound to individual tastes.

To make life easy, five preset sound patterns are built into the box. These range from heavy, which boosts very low and very high frequencies, to vocal which emphasises the mid-range at the expense of surrounding frequencies.

There is provision for five more sound patterns to be created and stored. Creative control is high.

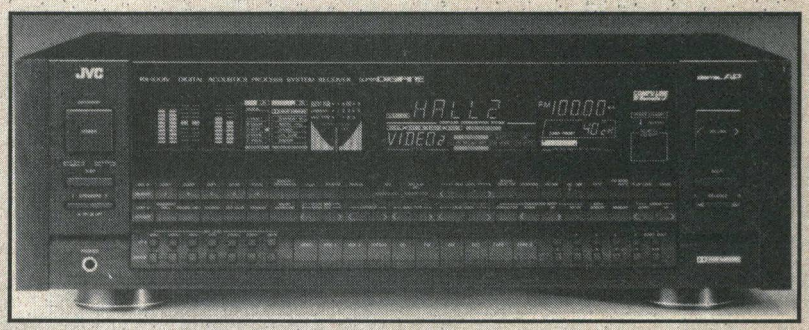
For our system we coupled the RX-1001 with a Pioneer CLD-1200, a player with comparatively low-resolution digital sound, and found we were able to add pace and attack to its output by pumping up the relevant frequencies.

Analogue laser discs were also made to sound a good deal more lively. To set it apart from the crowd, the RX-1001 has an onboard digital acoustics processor (DAP).

This can be employed to alter any given stereo sound field, in order to simulate a specific environment. Once again, five sound field patterns are available as presets: symphony hall, recital hall, live club, church and stadium.

Bundled within the DAP, and perhaps of more concrete appeal, is a Dolby Surround Sound decoder.

This extracts the hidden surround sound information encoded on many hi-fi video tapes and discs, for a live theatre-like viewing experience when a four speaker set-up is used.



The JVC RX-1001 is an exciting AV control centre.

The lift this gives to a blockbuster movie at home is considerable. Plain or vanilla two channel stereo sounds dull in comparison.

The unit also incorporates an AM/FM receiver, with 40 channel memory, and can handle no less than eight sources, including three full-video, with cross-dubbing capability.

Wrapping the package up is a bulky infra-red remote control with learning capacity. It's able to mimic up to 106 other key functions, from other, lesser, remote controls.

The RX-1001 is an exceptionally versatile unit, with much to commend it to the AV enthusiast. It's also reasonably priced at £769.

If each of its facilities were purchased separately (the DAP, receiver, switching box, ►

SONY MDP-212

SONY HAS moved into European CD Video with the launch of a player on the German market. There are no plans to introduce the machine in Britain before October, but grey imports have been spotted in London's Tottenham Court Road.

The MDP-212 includes all the usual CDV features, plus a few niceties which make it stand out from the stand. It can handle all disc sizes from 3in. up to 12in., and of course both the new digitally recorded CDs and old-fashioned analogue laser discs.

Facilities include the very useful memory-stop, which automatically recalls where the disc was stopped for restart from the same point later on, and sound channel selection opening the way for the duplication of disc soundtracks (for instance, in different languages).

The audio spec includes 4× oversampling, giving an impressive 4Hz-20KHz frequency response, with the dynamic range quoted at a massive 100dB. Sony also claims a horizontal picture resolution of 440 lines, although this is obviously dependent on the master quality of the discs it plays.

Like the Philips CDV-475, it has full Active Play capability for quality, trick play performance, plus a more unusual Auto Frame Advance and CX noise reductions. Unlike the Philips machines, the player has no digital output.

The MDP-212 is selling in London's West End for around £599. However, prospective purchasers are warned that because the machines have been imported without Sony's authorisation the official warranty may be invalid, so they should arrange service terms directly with their dealer.

RX-1001 coupled with matching JVC TD-V711 cassette deck.

◄ **mimic remote control, etc) they would almost certainly cost more — and the RX-1001 has the added virtues of one-box simplicity and neatness.**

To complete our system, we coupled the Pioneer player/JVC receiver combo to JVC's flagship cassette deck, the £380 TD-V711.

This machine is unusual in that it has a direct line input, enabling signals from CDV players to be input directly into it rather than via an amplifier. This shortens the signal path and so minimises sound degradation.

Surprisingly, the 711 is the only model in the JVC range to have HX Pro, alongside Dolby B and C noise reduction.

HX Pro is an ingenious headroom extension system that greatly improves high frequency saturation while reducing low level distortion.

This results in home recordings of improved clarity and depth. Using the CD direct input and engaging HX Pro, some truly excellent dubs were obtained.

Even recordings made on inexpensive quality ferric tape, like That's RX brand, sounded rich and lively.

Other 711 features include a tape monitoring facility (to compare source material with tape while recording), music scan (the deck can skip tracks by detecting the silent breaks between tunes), a tape remaining counter and gold-plated input/output terminals.

Individually, we found both JVC components to be impressive. But as a system, they're superb.

The RX-1001 is a major boon to any would-be system builder, while the TD-V711 makes excellent music. The combination is invigorating.

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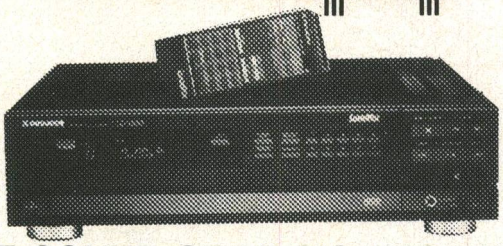

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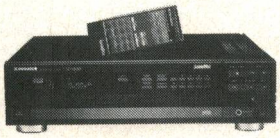

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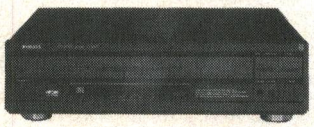

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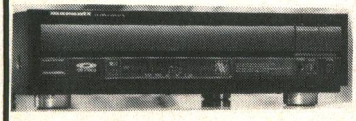

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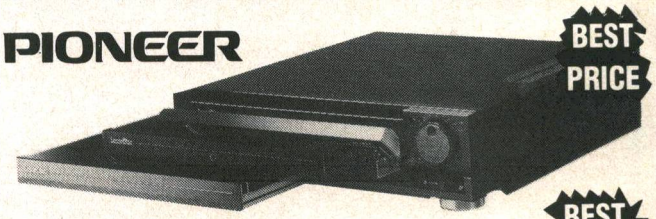

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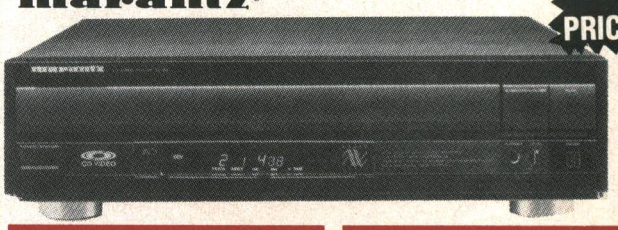

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CD VIDEO LaserVision LaserDisc

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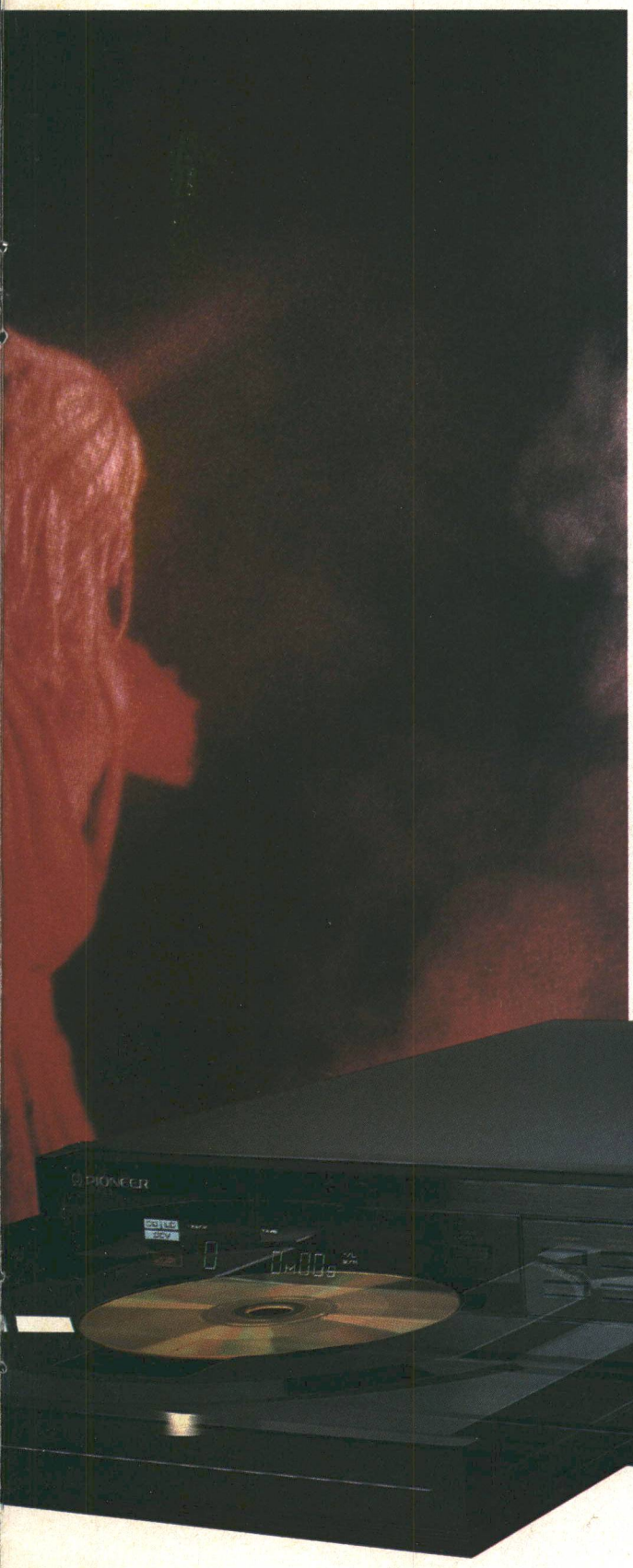

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OVERSAMPLING
The Guide To Better Sound

Marcus Miller looks at the oversampling sound system used on CD Video and explains why some players sound better than others

WHEN COMPACT Disc was first launched onto the market, some manufacturers boasted about its 'perfect' sound quality. But it wasn't long before music critics and hi-fi buffs began muttering that CD sound was rather less than perfect.

The companies backtracked and admitted that 'one or two bugs' still needed ironing out. One of these was the way a CD player processed the audio signal.

CD (and CD Video, which uses exactly the same sound processing) is a digital audio system, which means that it handles digital sound signals which have been converted from analogue sound signals.

This is done by a method called 'sampling'. The analogue signal is measured many thousands of times per second, and the results are converted into a stream of digital pulses.

These represent a string of binary numbers (noughts and ones) called bits. The bits are stored on a CD disc as a series of pits.

The standard CD sampling rate is fixed at 44,100 times per second (44.1KHz), and the bits are arranged into groups of 16 — that's why CD and CDV are called '16 bit systems'. These specifications mean that the CD format can cover the entire audio range (from 20Hz to 20KHz), and make an accurate copy of the analogue signal.

To restore the analogue signal, the CD player simply reverses the process. First, the pits are read by a laser, changed into a stream of digital pulses, and then sampled at a 44.1KHz frequency.

The snag is that during sampling, spurious frequencies are produced, and some of these can be as low as 24KHz. Although we can't hear these ultrasonic frequencies, they can interfere with top-end audio frequencies and roughen the sound.

As a stop gap, the first CD decks used sharp filters to cut the frequencies off at 22KHz, and so remove the ultrasonic frequencies. But these filters — 'brick wall filters' — hardened the sound, which is why some early machines sounded pretty ropey.

TO OVERCOME this problem, audio designers came up with a process called 'oversampling'.

This works by sampling the digital signal at a higher rate than the standard 44.1KHz, and has the effect of pushing the ultrasonic frequencies further away from the audio frequencies.

Some players use double oversampling, that is, the sampling rate is 88.2KHz. The spurious frequencies are moved up to around 68KHz, so that the player can now use filters which won't affect the audio frequencies.

Pioneer's CLD-1200 uses double oversampling, but other decks, such as the Philips CDV-475 and Marantz's CV-55, use four times, or quadruple oversampling.

This pushes the sampling frequency up to 176.4KHz, and puts the ultrasonic frequencies well out of the way at 88.2KHz!

Another benefit of oversampling is that the larger number of samples gives the CD player more information about the original sound signal. Microchip converters can use these extra 'clues' to reproduce a more accurate sound signal.

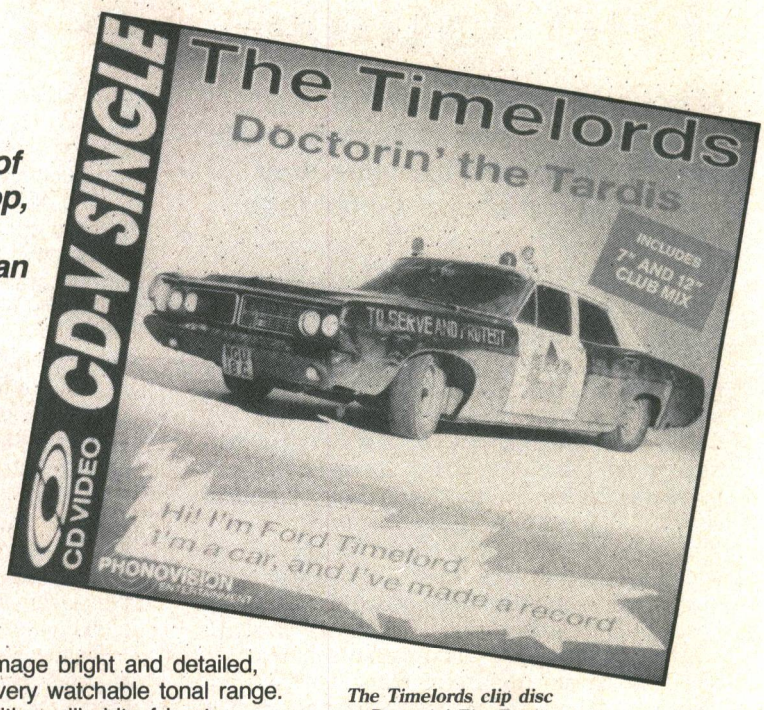
Some manufacturers are jumping onto the oversampling bandwagon, and marketing CD decks with eight or even 16 times oversampling.

But CD sound quality also depends upon the quality of the microchip converters. As a result, some decks with lower sampling rates can actually sound better than those machines with higher rates.

● *Four times oversampling on Philips' new clip player should filter spurious sound out of play.*

LASER DISC JURY

Steve Keaton runs through some of the latest CD Video releases — pop, rock, opera and movies. His recommendations are marked by an asterisk



The Timelords clip disc — **Doctorin' The Tardis.**

5IN. CLIP DISCS — £4.99 EACH

THE FAT BOYS: Wipeout

Video: Wipeout (4.37). Audio: Wipeout (4.37), Crushin' (4.43), Hell No! (4.16), Protect Yourself (4.08).
Sourced from an NTSC standard master, with slightly soft definition and dull colours, but the pressing is clean.

The clip opens with a little seen boxing skit, with The Fat Boys as seconds, then quickly cuts into the more familiar surf rap pop track; lots of gals in bikinis and wobbly jowls (the boys, not the gals) moving to a pumping bass beat and Beach Boys effects.

Curiously, the more you play it the slower it seems to get. Human beat boys beach on beach! Of the audio tracks, Crushin' is by far the best, a raunchy, paunchy, pop rap paeon. Audio quality throughout is somewhat dull and f(l)at.

GODLEY AND CREME: Cry

Video: Cry (3.36). Audio: Cry Extended Version (6.30), Love Bombs (4.53), Under Your Thumb (3.45), Power Behind The Throne (3.31).
G&C's visually striking, eventually uninteresting, b/w face-melting piece, wherein various physogs cleverly blend into one another as they mime to the track.

There are a few white spots evident on the unforgiving black backdrop, and the video quality is rather mediocre. The audio tracks range from plastic white reggae (Throne) to abstract cacophony (Bombs).

THE STYLE COUNCIL: Have You Ever Had It Blue

Video: Have You Ever Had It Blue (4.46). Audio: Have You Ever Had It Blue (4.46), Mr Cod's Dream (2.25), With Everything To Lose (4.06).
The clip track is a sprightly monochrome video of some quality. The pressing is bright and clean, the video image bright and detailed, with a very watchable tonal range. Ends with a silly bit of banter.

The remaining tracks are soft soap soul, as smooth as a litre of Easy-Scoop and probably just as bad for your teeth. Audio quality is fine, with lots of obvious texture.

VISAGE: Mind Of A Toy

Video: Mind Of A Toy (3.33). Audio: Mind Of A Toy (3.33), We Move (6.28), Frequency Dance Mix (interminable).
Dusty old nostalgia, directed by Godley and Creme, in which Steve Strange combats a variety of puppet menace and tries hard to look eerie.

Technically, this clip is excellent. The pictures are sharp and vivid (the track was shot on tape, not film), and the pressing is clean. The audio is also impressive, with a wide, steely soundstage.

Artistically though, both sound and vision are dated, (not very) futuristic electronic nonsense. Why this old pop folly is out on CDV is beyond me.

SWING OUT SISTER: Breakout*

Video: Breakout (3.44). Audio: Breakout (3.54), Fooled By A Smile (3.40), Communion (4.38), Surrender (6.36).
Flashy, unpretentious high calibre pop, grafted onto a technically ingenious video full of life and lust.

Video quality is good, bright with a wide dynamic range, and lots of visible texture. Audio clarity is similarly pleasing. A bright, bouncy, tuneful package of much merit.

CINDERELLA: Gypsy Rose

Video: Gypsy Rose (3.51). Audio: Second Wind (3.57), Fire And Ice (3.19), Long Cold Winter (5.22), Gypsy Road (4.05).
Bold, sassy denim and leather rock with more hooks than a coach load of trout fishermen.

Although there are a trio of better Cinderella videos to be had, this performance clip come travelogue is passable enough, and of fair quality.

The picture's OK, but the sound is noticeably better, with chomping guitars and choral vocals. Flash fun.

THE TIMELORDS: Doctorin' The Tardis*

Video: Doctorin' The Tardis (3.34). Audio: Doctorin' The Tardis (3.34), Instrumental (4.28), 12in. Club Mix (8.09).
Inspired lunacy that welds the theme from Doctor Who to Gary Glitter's Rock 'N' Roll pop classic, to great (if mindless) effect.

The clip is wondrously sharp and full of boffo laughs (although I feel certain a longer, fuller version is available), while the subsidiary tracks are a heady miasma of Sweet/Glitter-Chinn/Chapman reprises.

A suitably dotty tribute to the daft days of '70s glam rock. Recommended.

DEEP PURPLE: Bad Attitude

Video: Bad Attitude (4.28). Audio: Bad Attitude (4.40), Black And White (3.38), The Unwritten Law (4.33), Strangeways (5.56).

Sometimes I worry about the people that choose these CDV releases. If we must have a release from the reformed Deep Purple, then the obvious video track is Call Of The Wild — a bright, colourful, hugely repeatable nudge in the ribs.

This, however, is dreadful, being dull, sombre, slow . . . and in black and white.

Wake me up before you go-go.

THE MISSION: Tower Of Strength*

Video: Tower Of Strength (4.44). Audio: Tower Of Strength (4.36), For Ever More (5.57), Tadeusz (4.55), Dream On (3.54).

Monstrous, mythical, magical draft of pomp rock brews, fronted by a quite super clip. Tower Of Strength is perfect CDV material, full of vibrant imagery and power.

Technically, it's also excellent, with a wealth of detail revealed in both sound and vision. Of the audio tracks, most notable is the band's moody interpretation of the old Aerosmith tune, Dream On.

STATUS QUO: Ain't Complaining

Video: Ain't Complaining (4.20). Audio: Ain't Complaining (6.34), That's Alright (3.30), Lean Machine (3.37), In The Army Now (4.43).

Hugely unfunny 'comic' clip featuring Griff Rhys Jones as, amongst other things, an amateur cameraman filming a Quo vid on the cheap with his Canon camcorder.

Laugh? I didn't start. Fine audio, good pressing, but slightly soft video quality.

THE CURE: Inbetween Days

Video: Inbetween Days (2.55). Audio: Inbetween Days (2.55), The Exploding Boy (2.52), A Few Hours After This (2.25), Six Different Ways Live (3.24), Push Live (4.33).

Tim Pope's Cure videos are always good value. This is the performance clip with the gyrating camera and multi-coloured animated socks. The video quality is a bit murky, but the sound on all the tracks is crisp and dry.

THE CURE: Catch*

Video: Catch (2.42). Audio: Catch (2.42), Breathe (4.46), A Chain Of Flowers (4.55), Icing Sugar (3.18).

Almost languid love song filmed on what looks like the isle of Capri, but was probably Elstree. Good tune, bolstered by high definition visuals and lush colours.

Once again, the clarity and depth of the sound throughout is invigorating. One for the collection.

12IN. LASER VIDEO ALBUMS

BON JOVI: Slippery When Wet — The Videos — £16.99*

Wild On The Streets, Livin' On A Prayer (Live), You Give Love A Bad Name, Never Say Goodbye, Livin' On A Prayer, Wanted (Dead Or Alive). Total running time 41 minutes.

Excellent compilation snapshot of the hot rock band on a hit roll. Every track is a winner, and all have been filmed with an admirable sense of scope and dynamism — You Give Love A Bad Name is a classic of its kind.

Mixed in with the clips are various band chats and asides, which obviously become increasingly irritating the more you spin the disc (it would have been nice to have this banter individually chaptered so that it could be programmed out at whim).

There is also a rarely seen live version of Prayer, taken from the 1987 MTV Video Music Awards. Sound and vision is uniformly acceptable throughout. A must for those who like their rock glitzy and accessible.

HUEY LEWIS AND THE NEWS: Fore And More — £16.99

If This Is It, Stuck With You (Live), Jacob's Ladder, Hip To Be Square, The Making Of Doin' It (part 1), Simple As That (Live), The Making Of Doin' It (part 2), Doin' It (All For My Baby), The Power Of Love. Total running time 52 minutes.

Likeable, unremarkable, good time rock characterised by a brace of light-hearted, occasionally humourous clips and behind the scenes documentary footage.

Godley and Creme's Hip To Be Square is virtually unwatchable, being more of a medical examination than a music video, but Doin' It and Power both have genuine charm.

Sourced from a weak NTSC master, picture quality is soft and flat throughout, while the audio is occasionally hissy.

THE PRINCESS BRIDE *(rated PG)* **— £24.99***

Starring Cary Ewles, Mandy Patinkin, Peter Falk. Total running time 94 minutes. Analogue stereo sound. CX encoding.

Excellent pressing of Rob Reiner's wonderfully affectionate tribute to the fairy tale, which enthusiastically twists the genre's conventions inside out.

A little boy with the flu, is read The Princess Bride by his grandad, a tale of giants, wizards, swordsmen, monsters and multi-layered dialogue. The gags are great, the characters a hoot, and the video quality fine.

Every now and again it surprises with a landscape scene of often three-dimensional depth. The stereo soundtrack is curiously discrete though, with only a cramped soundstage, although the clarity is ► 20

Deep Purple 5in. — Bad Attitude.

THE GLOBAL PAINTBOX

CD Graphics is potentially a great complement to CD Video. Marcus Miller investigates this new format hybrid with futuristic possibilities

CD GRAPHICS is the latest in a line of developments which matches digital quality sound with pictures on a CD disc.

Last year saw the launch of the first domestic 'CD with pictures' format — CD Video.

But whereas CDV is a mix of moving pictures and sound, CD-G is a blend of still pictures, text and sound.

CD-G (also known as 'background video' — BGV) is a new format based on an old idea. A CD audio disc stores music as a pattern of pits which represent digital data, or 'bits'.

Around 97 per cent of the bits on CD disc are for music and error correction, but when CD was first conceived, 3 per cent of the bits were put aside for other functions.

Some of these extra bits — called 'subcodes' — are used for track identification and for showing how long a track or disc plays for.

But the rest of the subcodes can be used for graphics and text. This feature was built in because a 5in. CD disc is much smaller than the 12in. LP record it's designed to replace.

Most LP sleeves contain recording information, artists' biographies, lyrics and so on, and CD designers thought there wouldn't be enough room for all of this on the back of a CD sleeve. Enter CD Graphics.

WHEN CD was first launched, much was made of the CD-G facility, and most players sported a subcode socket.

But then record companies decided to issue CDs with tiny booklets containing all the information, and suddenly, CD-G didn't seem such a good idea after all.

Soon, subcode sockets were dropped from newer CD players, and CD-G was quietly forgotten.

But what has brought CD-G back to life is the Japanese craze of karaoke. Every weekday evening, thousands of Japanese businessmen stream into karaoke bars where they drink and sing along in public to the backing tracks of favourite songs.

The song lyrics are read from a TV monitor screen and supplied from a karaoke machine.

An amazing 100,000 of these karaoke machines use the CD Graphics system, and there are over 800 karaoke discs (each with around 18 titles) available in Japan.

Now one of the largest karaoke manufacturers, JVC has decided to push CD-G onto the wider market.

A CD Graphics display looks rather like a teletext picture. Each display is made up of 288 × 192 pixels, and up to 16 colours can be used from a palette of 4,096.

A CD-G disc can store up to 1,500 different images, and have up to 15 different languages written onto it. The still pictures are scrolled onto and off the screen, with each pass taking between two to 10 seconds.

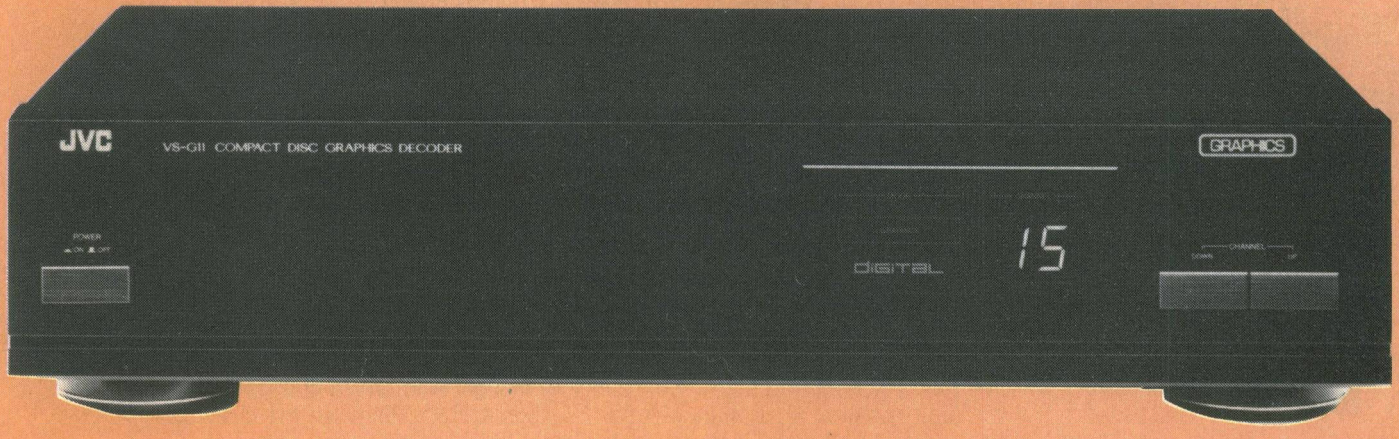
ALTHOUGH CD-G doesn't use moving pictures, the screen can still look fairly active.

For example, a display may have a solarised picture of the artist in the screen centre, with song lyrics scrolling across the bottom and biographical notes scrolling down the side simultaneously.

One of the advantages of CD Graphics is that the discs will play back normally on standard CD players: the CD deck simply reads the musical data and ignores the extra subcodes.

And whereas CDV discs are tied to the local TV standards, such as PAL or NTSC, CD-G discs have worldwide compatibility and work on *any* colour TV system.

If you want to display the graphics encoded on a CD-G disc, it'll mean using a graphics decoder, which sits between the CD player and a television set.



● *JVC's CD Graphics decoder — a hit with the singalong Japanese.*

● *Possibilities for the future: psychedelic graphics for the fab four, and pictures with multi-lingual words accompanying Prince.*

This reads the subcode information from the CD deck, converts it into pictures and text, and feeds this to the TV monitor.

Although CD-G discs have worldwide compatibility, a graphics decoder will only work on a local TV system.

This means you could buy a CD-G disc in the US and play it on your home equipment, but you wouldn't be able to use an American NTSC decoder in Europe.

Also, because the subcode information gets 'lost' when sent via a standard CD output socket, the decoder has to be attached to a subcode or digital-out socket of a CD player — but not all CD players have these sockets.

That's why if you're planning for the future, it pays to check if your CD deck has the right socketry. The Philips CDV-475 CDV player has just such a socket.

IT ALSO pays to have a TV set with the right sockets. JVC's prototype graphics decoder, the VS-G11, has composite video and S-terminal output sockets — but no RF connector.

This is because sending the signal via the RF lead results in a loss of picture resolution — as anyone who plays computer games through an ordinary TV set will know.

So getting the best from CD Graphics will mean using a TV set equipped with Scart, direct video or S-terminal connector.

JVC has launched CD Graphics decoders in Japan and the US, while partners Warner New Media has released a number of CD-G titles. CD-G discs cost the same as ordinary CDs, so shops don't have to double stock.

A graphics decoder costs around £250, but there are plans for CD players with built-in decoders, costing around £100-£150 more than standard CD players. JVC are planning a European CD-G launch by the end of the year.

A possible spin-off of CD-G is the hybrid CDV/CD-G disc. This would be especially useful for the 5in. CDV 'clip' discs, which contain a six minute video clip and a further 20 minutes of digital audio.

But once the clip has been watched, the viewer is left with a blank TV screen. However, this audio portion could be encoded with graphics to make the discs more appealing.

Hitachi already markets a £350 CDV/CD-G player in Japan called the DA-V10, and it may be only a matter of time before similar decks appear over here. Watch this space.

Contrasting 12in. discs: **Eurythmics — Live *and* An Evening With . . . Kire Te Kanawa.**

17 ◄ there. I suspect this is one of those rare movies that only improves with familiarity. Music is provided by Dire Straits' Mark Knopfler.

DIRTY DANCING *(rated 15)* **— £22.99**

Starring Patrick Swayze and Jennifer Grey. Total running time 100 minutes. Analogue sound. CX encoding.

Outrageously popular teen dance romance bolstered here by a great, clear stereo soundtrack and detailed video. Lots of fun, quite repeatable and the next best thing to seeing it in a cinema.

STATUS QUO: Rockin' Through The Years — £19.99

Paper Plane, Caroline, Down Down, Roll Over Lay Down, Rain, Mystery Song, Wild Side Of Life, Rockin' All Over The World, Again And Again, Whatever You Want, Living On An Island, Runaway, What You're Proposing, Lies, Don't Drive My Car, Something About You Baby I Like, Rock 'N' Roll, Dear John, Ol' Rag Blues, A Mess Of Blues, Marguerita Time, Going Down Tonight, The Wanderer, Rollin' Home, In The Army Now, Dreamin'. Total running time 102 minutes.

Exhaustive and exhausting history of the Quo that's virtually undigestible in its thoroughness.

Predictably the quality is variable from clip to clip (the sound is all over the place) but some of the older videos remain in surprisingly good technical nick.

An intriguing mix of great and dire songs. Unquestionably good value for money though.

THE WHO: Who's Better, Who's Best — £19.99*

My Generation, Can't Explain, Substitute, Kids Are Alright, I'm A Boy, Happy Jack, Pictures Of Lily, You Better You Bet, Anyway Anywhere Anyhow, I Can See For Miles, Magic Bus, Pinball Wizard, I'm Free, See Me Feel Me, Baba O'Riley, Join Together, Relay, 5.15, Who Are You?, Won't Get Fooled Again. Total running time 75 minutes.

Marvellous collection of largely rare footage, from montage material shot in '63 through to Quadrophenia in '79.

Obviously, the technical quality of all this varies dramatically, but that's hardly the point is it? The disc paints an exciting picture and completists might like to know that it contains tracks not available in any other media.

BIG COUNTRY: Live — £19.99

1000 Stars, Angle Park, Close Action, Lost Patrol, Wonderland, The Storm, Highland Laddie, Porroh Man, Chance, Inwards, Fields Of Fire, Harvest Home, Tracks Of My Tears, In A Big Country, Auld Lang Syne. Total running time 75 minutes.

Raw, unpolished live show recorded in Barrowland, Glasgow '83/84, that's rich in atmosphere and fire, but technically rather mediocre.

It's been shot on video rather than film, and while reasonably sharp it looks rather noisy. The audio track is similarly raucous and suffers from the odd spurious crackle and pop.

KIRI TE KANAWA: An Evening With . . . — £29.99

Featuring Arias by Mozart, Puccini and Gounod, with songs from My Fair Lady. Total running time 109 minutes. Gatefold sleeve with Libretto.

A rich live performance at the Royal Albert Hall that features the classical arias on side one and the lighter Lerner/Loewe fare on side two.

I prefer the latter, if only for the humorous performances of Warren Mitchell and Jeremy Irons.

The proceedings have been captured in sharp relief, the pressing is clean, and the audio excellent having been digitally remastered specifically for this release. Delightful.

MOZART: Piano Concertos Nos. 19K, 459 & 23K. 488 — £29.99

Total running time 57 minutes. Gatefold sleeve with leaflet.

Digitally remastered performance disc featuring conductor Karl Bohm and the Wiener Philharmoniker. Sourced from a medium resolution master tape, the pictures are clear and pleasing although they steadfastly maintain a discrete distance from the sound; the two never really gelling to create any appreciable atmosphere.

The end result is a rather dry and uninvolving experience that might have benefited immeasurably from a cameo by Tom Hulce.

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE: Giselle — £29.99*

Ballet in two acts. Total running time 90 minutes. Gatefold sleeve and leaflet.

Quite superb rendition of Adolphe Adam's famous ballet by the American Ballet Theatre with Carla Fracci and Eric Bruhn as principal players.

The video quality is magnificent, the sets sumptuous and the remastered audio an absolute treat. What more could you want?

EURYTHMICS: Live — £19.99*

Sex Crimes, 1984, Let's Go, The Last Time, Here Comes The Rain Again, It's Alright, When Tomorrow Comes, There Must Be An Angel, Who's That Girl, Right By Your Side, Thorn In My Side, Sweet Dreams, Would I Lie To You?, Missionary Man, Sisters Are Doing It, The Miracle Of Love. Total running time 90 minutes.

Terrific concert movie, blessed with superb picture quality and a bright, upfront audio track. So polished you can see your face in it.

THE CURE: In Orange — £19.99

Shake Dog Shake, Piggy In The Mirror, Play For Today, A Strange Day, Primary, Kyoto Song, Charlotte Sometimes, Inbetween Days, A Night Like This, Push, One Hundred Years, A Forest, Sinking, Close To Me, Let's Go To Bed, Six Different Ways, Three Imaginary Boys, Boys Don't Cry, Faith, Give Me It, 10.15 Saturday Night, Killing An Arab. Total running time 113 minutes.

Altogether darker concert film than the Eurythmics, shot outdoors in fading light. The picture quality though is just as good, with the crowd scenes betraying tremendous detail.

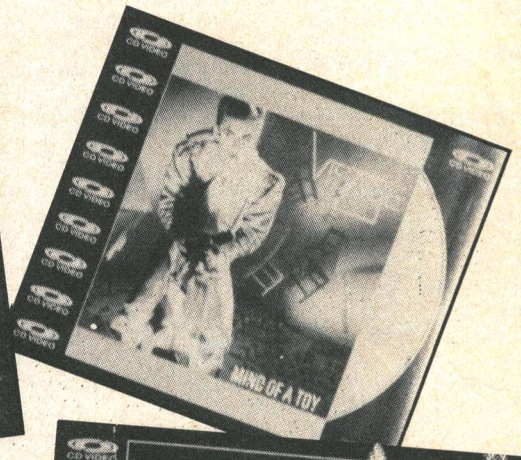
Interestingly, it's presented in a semi-letterbox format and is none the worse for it. The audio is clear, if a bit thin.

CDV RELEASES

The following CDV software comes from Polygram and is available now — 5in. clips will sell for £4.99, 8in. £9.99, 12in. £20.

5in. Clips Out Now

Tears For Fears — Everybody Wants To Rule The World
Elton John — Nikita
Def Leppard — Love Bites
Was Not Was — Walk The Dinosaur
Swing Out Sister — Breakout
The Mission — Wasteland
Curiosity Killed The Cat — Misfit
Wet Wet Wet — Angel Eyes
Big Country — King Of Emotion
Cameo — Word Up
Kiss — Crazy Nights
Bon Jovi — Living On A Prayer
Derek B — Got The Juice
INXS — Never Tear Us Apart
Dire Straits — Money For Nothing
Level 42 — Running In The Family
Pepsi & Shirlie — Heartache
Godley & Creme — Cry
Visage — Mind Of A Toy
The Cure — Why Can't I Be You
Fat Boys — Wipe Out
Style Council — Threw It All Away
Vanessa Paradis — Joe Le Taxi
Lloyd Cole and The Commotions — Perfect Skin
Moody Blues — Out There Somewhere
Shakatak — Down On The Streets

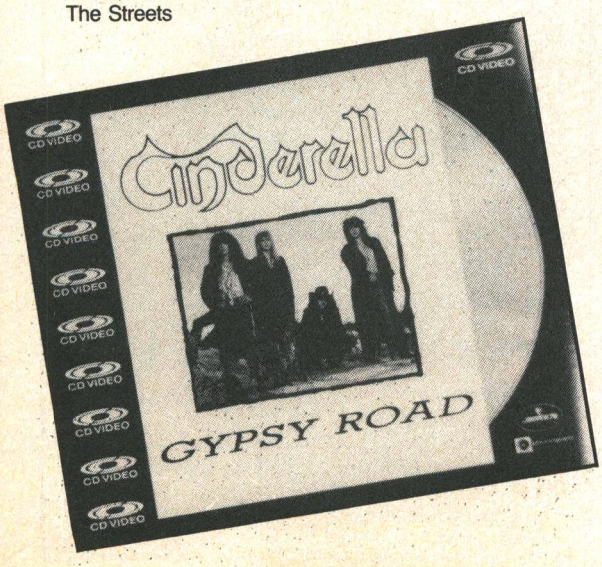


Siouxsie and The Banshees — Peek A Boo
Magnum — Start Talking Love
James Brown — Playback Mix
Deep Purple — Bad Attitude
Communards — Don't Leave Me
Bananarama — Love In The 1st Degree
Hothouse Flowers — Don't Go
Voice of the Beehive — Don't Call Me Baby
Joyce Simms — Come Into My Life
Fine Young Cannibals — Suspicious Minds
Salt 'n' Pepa — Push It
Mory Kante — Yeke Yeke
Joshua Bell — Hungarian Dance

Love & Money — Hallelujah Man
All About Eve — Martha's Harbour
Lilac Time — Return To Yesterday
Elton John — I Don't Want To Etc . . .
Status Quo — Ain't Complaining
Wet Wet Wet — Temptation
Clive Griffin — Don't Make Me Wait
Jerry Harrison — Rev It Up
Was Not Was — Anything Can . . .
The Mission — Tower Of Strength

Big Country — In A Big Country
Curiosity — Free
INXS — Need You Tonight
Cinderella — Gypsy Road
Yello — The Race

Tears For Fears — Shout
Tears For Fears — Head Over . . .
Tears For Fears — I Believe
Dire Straits — Walk Of Life
Cure — In Between Days ▶



◀ Cure — Catch
Level 42 — Lessons In Love
Level 42 — Leaving Me Now
Level 42 — Heaven In My Hands
Lloyd Cole — Lost Weekend
Lloyd Cole — From The Hip
Shakatak — Dr Manic
Style Council — Long Hot Summer
Style Council — Ever Had It Blue
Fat Boys — Twist
Kingdom Come — Get It On
Moody Blues — Your Wildest Dream

8in. EPs Out Now

Swing Out Sister — And Why Not
Level 42 — Family Of Five
Wet Wet Wet — Video Singles
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Pepsi & Shirlie — Alright Now
Dire Straits — Brothers In Arms
INXS — Kick — The Video Flick
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Heart — If Looks Could Kill
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Roxy Music — The High Road
Style Council — Showbiz
Dire Straits — Alchemy
10cc/Godley & Creme — Changing Faces
Tears For Fears — Scenes From The Big Chair
James Last — Live In East Berlin
The Who — Who's Better Who's Best
Def Leppard — Hystoria
Magnum — On The Wings Of Heaven — Live
Status Quo — Rocking Thru The Years
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Richard Strauss — Elektra, with the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.
Verdi — Rigoletto, with Pavarotti, Wixell, Gruberova and the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.
Puccini — Tosca, with Kabaivanska, Domingo, Milnes and the National Philharmonic Orchestra.
Bach — The Brandenburg Concertos, by Concertus Musicus Wien.
Solti in Concert: Rossini — Overtures/Strauss — Don Juan/Smetana — Moldau/Liszt — Les Preludes with Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Orchestra and George Solti.

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Leoncavallo — I Pagliacci, from La Scala, Milan.
Schubert — String Quartet in A minor "Rosamunde", Orlando Quartet.

Deutsche Grammophon
Verdi — Otello, Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra.
Mahler — Symphony No 2, London Symphony Orchestra.
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Hommage A Sevilla — Domingo.
Mozart — Piano Concertos Nos 19 & 23, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.
Brahms — Violin Concerto/Double Concerto, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.
Puccini — La Bohème, La Scala, Milan.
Richard Strauss — Salome, Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra.
Das Rheingold — Bayreuth Festival Orchestra.
Die Walküre — Bayreuth Festival Orchestra.
Siegfried — Bayreuth Festival Orchestra.
Die Götterdämmerung — Bayreuth Festival Orchestra.
The Making of 'The Ring' — Bayreuth Festival Orchestra.
Falstaff — Bacquier/V.P.O./Solti.
Hansel & Gretel — Gruberova/V.P.O./Solti.
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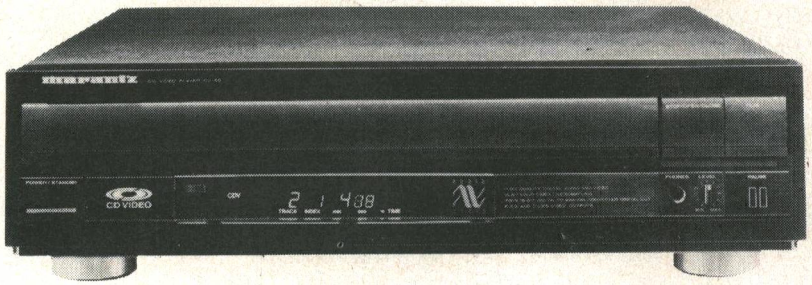

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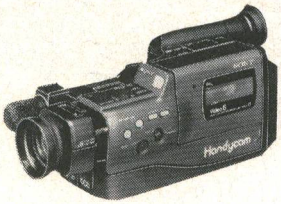

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